

Roughing it in the Sandwich Islands

By David Wagoner

A. GROVE DAY (Editor): Mack Twain's Letters from Hawaii 298pp. Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii. Paperback, \$4.45.

When the lanky, red-haired, mustachioed, cigar-puffing, thirty-one-year-old newspaper correspondent who had been calling himself Mark Twain for only three years, arrived in Honolulu in 1866, he was relatively unknown, the author of a few widely reprinted sketches but of no books. When he left for the mainland a month later, he had laid the groundwork for one of the most curious and complex literary careers in American literature.

His experiences in the Sandwich Islands (a name he scorned as being much less fitting than Raihono Islands) gave him the material for twenty-five travel letters printed in the Sacramento (California) Union, then the most influential newspaper on the West Coast, and for his first highly successful lecture series after his return. They provided him with the means he employed in his first important book, *The Innocents Abroad* (1869), and subsequently about one third of the 90,000 words in the letters from Hawaii, by A. Grove Day's count, showed up in various forms, his skill extremely funny and highly readable *Roughing It* (1872).

The letters are, for the most part, disjointed, anecdotal, and idiosyncratic, an amalgam of workaday journalism, whimsy, shrewd and poetic observation, accurate commercial prophecy, character assassination, and tongue-in-cheek tall tales. The accounts of his more excruciating experiences (seaickness, saddle boils, the running war against vermin) have a geniality and a genuinely amused amiability about them that disappeared soon after, along with his youth. Though he retained, always, his gift of self-mockery, these letters preserve his gentlest form.

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Twain did not deceive himself with any idea about the male savagery of the Polynesians. They were too good at horse-riding and lying, for instance, and much of the time he had both elbows up in self-defence like W. C. Fields in the midst of not-so-pleasant aggressors. Later he entitled his first fiction lectures on the mainland "Our Fellow Savages of the Sandwich Islands". He distrusted what remained of their uncorrupted culture, with "special" reservations about their religion and human sacrifices, and felt they had been rescued from despotism and chaos by at least a veneer of Christian ideals. It seems incredible that Twain had so many good words to say about savagery, but the words are there in hot and cold print.

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He observed the month-long royal funeral of Princess Victoria Kaiulani, but his eye for King Kamehameha V and his wife, Queen Emma, was with commoners, and he paid several visits to the legislative assembly. Any official body of government that would knowingly permit a Mark Twain to observe it would have to be more than a little unusual, but of course this group did not realize who was sitting in its gallery. He brought forth his already incomparable venom to use as Minister of Finance Harris, a transplanted New Englander, in a style that would serve him the rest of his life.

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makes considerable noise and a great to-do, and impresses his profoundest impressions with an oppressive solemnity and ponderous windmill gesticulations with his fists. He raises his hand aloft and looks piercingly at the interpreter and launches out into a sort of prodigious declamation, thundering upward higher and higher toward his climax—words, words, awful words, words, given with a convincing emphasis that almost inspires them with meaning, and just as you take a sustaining breath and "stand by for the crash, his poor little rocket fizzles faintly in the zenith and goes out ignominiously. The sensation one experiences is the same a dinner feels when he puts in a blister which he thinks will send the whole top of a mountain to the moon, and after running a quarter of a mile in ten seconds to get out of the way, is disgusted to hear it makes a trifling, dull report, discharge a plume of smoke, and barely jolt a half a bushel of dirt. After one of these incomprehensible things, Mr Harris bends down and smiles a horrid smile of self-complacency in the face of the Minister of the Interior, bends to the other side and continues it, and the face of the Minister of Foreign Affairs; beams serenely upon the admiring lobby, and finally confers the remnants of it upon the unhappy interpreter. . . . And in seven years I have never lost my cheerfulness and wanted to lay me down in some secluded spot, and die, and be at rest, until I heard him try to be funny today.

Twain's use of the double or the divided man in his work, long ago remarked on and examined in detail by his critics, here has its fullest form in the character of Mr Brown, Twain's fictitious fellow traveller whose opinions are coarser, more outspoken, and more in the vernacular than Twain's own. Brown is the loud scopic, the unhesitating complainer, the huck to be retained, always, his gift of self-mockery, these letters preserve his gentlest form.

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Twain's more flowery passages. After a detailed and admiring description of a coco palm, Brown answers: "I don't see it. . . . People that haven't climbed one are always drizzling about how pretty it is. And when they make pictures of these hot countries they always shove one of the ragged things into the foreground. I don't see what there is about it that's handsome; it looks like a feather duster struck by lightning. Though Brown disappears in the passages Twain used in *Roughing It*, he headed all the dopplegänger's advice and went on heeding it for much of his life.

Sometimes he sounds exactly like himself in his prime. "We found the fish market crowded for the native is very fond of fish, and eat the article raw. Let us change the subject." For this, his first visit to the tropics, Twain had not yet begun to wear his tropical whimsies—his habitual apparel in his later years in less appropriate clothes—but instead, according to Professor Day, wore "a starched brown linen duster reaching to his ankles," a mode of dress that would make him stand out even today in competition with some of the world's most eccentrically clad tourists whose savours to outshine rainbows make sunglasses in Honolulu mandatory.

This strange young man, making a temporary escape from the temperate zone and bringing along his own special forms of intemperance, was frequently considered to be drunk by people meeting him for the first time, largely because of his slurring drawl and exaggerated gestures, but chances are they were only half right and then only half the time. He drank as much as he could handle, which by all accounts was considerable, but apparently not more yet it is no surprise to discover he was not an early rider. He indicates this in his own way by describing how he set out on horseback for an excursion to inspect the local prison, possibly for future reference.

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the west, or the north (the points of the compass being all the same to me, in as much as, for good reasons, I have not had opportunity thus far of discovering whereabouts the sun rises in this country—I know where it sets, but I don't know how it gets there nor which direction it comes from), we presently arrived at a massive coral edifice. . . . An ex-harponeer named Herman McVittie, who had not yet written a book either, tried beaching himself in Honolulu in 1843, aged twenty-four, clerking in a general store and gathering outraged impressions he later recorded in *Typee* and *Omoo* about the deplorable doggerel of the native population who had already lost the innocence he preferred in the Marquesas Islands. Seeing two naked Polynesians trying with little success to haul a white woman's rickshaw-like cart through mud and being disappointed for their failure, he took much for his gorge, and he shipped out as a common seaman on a warship after a four-month stay.

Robert Louis Stevenson in 1888-89 lasted slightly longer on the beach at Waikiki where he finished *The Master of Ballantrae*, composed an impassioned defence of his faraway but beloved Samojos during their political difficulties, and sketched out his tribute to Father Damien, leper colony on the neighbouring island of Molokai. A bronze plaque at the foot of an enormous banyan tree in a courtyard near the beach alleges that Stevenson wrote *Dr. McVittie*, though a contemporary scholarship puts his open-ended stay at four miles away. The hotel that owns the tree may, in the long run, have to settle for Jack London, Somerset Maugham, Graham Greene, James Michener, Dorothy L. Sayers, and innumerable lesser personages.

But today sitting under those massive branches whose roots dangle in mid-air, listening to the resident mynah birds and doves and taking in some of Twain's favourite anecdotes, one can imagine many good things have happened there, including the well-written words: "I was a very great shame we could not have Twain's opinion of present-day beach bums, surfers, and the

sunburnt acres of tourist skin observable daily at Waikiki. He might well have been more blistering than the sun, though obviously he himself was not fond of over-exposure except on the part of attractive young women.

His references to hula dancers and nude bathing and the long aleek hair and colourful mum-mums of Polynesian women leave little doubt that when this young man last six beautiful weeks on the island of Maui, writing no letters and telling no tales, he was not solely occupied with cigars, whisky, and the memorization of landscapes. After his return to Honolulu, he wrote:

It has been six weeks since I touched a pen. In explanation and excuse I offer the fact that I spent that time (with the exception of one week on the island of Maui) only at back yard yesterday. I never spent so pleasant a month before, or had any place good-bye so regretfully. . . . I had a jolly time. I would not have fooled away any of it with anything less than a very considerable what-ever.

His final letter records in detail an expanded and improved in *Roughing It*—a strenuous visit on horseback to the crater of the volcano Kilauea, written for the most part after he had returned to California. He seems perfectly at home describing this experience, perhaps because he was an active volcano himself, and makes some fascinating assessments of man's inability to calculate the scale of the grandiose and does his best to overcome his resentment at being "impressed".

But writers like Twain whose views of the beneficence of nature were jaundiced by being raised in more erratic and less exotic climes seldom write for very long in the tropics. They have been known to succumb to a great mind-crashing, soul-vaporizing lethargy in which all writing instruments become as unfamiliar as the tools of a craftsman and have watched languidly while their manuscripts appear to undergo the first stages of tropical rot. They seem anxious to get back to climates where the bad manners of God are more consistent, where life is less like a dream, where light-effects and halmy breezes, where life stays in its own mind and character and may be attacked without the intercession of quite so many flowers.



Polynesians and Puritans

By G. B. Milner

MARJORIE SINCLAIR: Nahi'ena'ena: Sacred Daughter of Hawaii 177pp. Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii. \$8.95.

ALBERTINE LOOMIS: For Whom are the Stars? Revolution and Counter-revolution of Hawaii. \$8.95.

229pp. Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii. \$9.95.

Hawaii might easily have been added to the British Empire. In the 1790s, Vancouver accepted an offer of cession on behalf of King George III but nothing came of it. In 1843 Lord George Paulet accepted another offer of allegiance to Britain and the Union Jack actually flew over the islands for several months. However, HM Government promptly disavowed Lord George's private enterprise.

These two books are linked by the theme of the royal family of Hawaii and its visits to London, and both span the beginning and the end of the independent kingdom. On the jacket of *Nahi'ena'ena* the almond-shaped eyes of this Polynesian princess look alert but anxious. At first flush the book seems just right for a deck-chair under the palms of Waikiki. Light weight (in both senses) and nostalgic. Where historical data are not helpful, the author's imagination carries the reader on with plausible surmises and rhetorical flourishes. Yet on closer inspection, it is clear that she has patiently worked her way through contemporary records and missionary archives. Marjorie Sinclair teaches English at the University of Hawaii, and if this book verges on the historical romance it is at least well documented.

It is a sombre story which, had it happened in a different context, might have been a tragedy. The other Polynesian societies, Hawaii before the white man seems to have been preoccupied almost to obsession with the privileges and imperatives of rank. At the apex of this social pyramid were the few persons of noble birth and appearance who were hedged with divinity and shielded by a complex of taboos infringed only at mortal risk. To preserve the purity of the blood royal, some siblings were expected to marry, and it is clear that the incest which strikes pity and terror and gives the book its main interest.

Nahi'ena'ena, born c 1815, was the youngest of the three most highly ranking children of King Kamehameha I, who had conquered the whole of Hawaii. His principal widow, before her death in 1823, had entrusted the princess to the care and guidance of the missionaries recently arrived from New England. After the death of her elder brother Kamehameha II in 1824, while on a visit to England,

the crown passed to the younger one, a boy of about ten, and an unhappy regency followed. During her too brief reign, she witnessed a bitter civil war between certain ambitious chiefs, representing the values and interests of traditional Hawaiian society, and the missionaries, whose aim was to replace a society warlike, now helpless and inoperative way of life, with one based on middle-class and puritanical American morality.

If they had been more tolerant and faced the fact that their austerity was too much to ask of young Polynesian flesh and blood, they might have retained their influence over the princess. As it was, she old hearts proved to be too strong, especially when reinforced by adulation, gambling and alcohol. Yet there was no escape from the double-bind. Once missionary control was removed, social pressures were renewed for Nahi'ena'ena to make a ritual union with her brother King Kamehameha III. At last in 1834 she yielded and married him according to custom and in open defiance of the missionaries. The union however was short-lived and soon after she married again, this time in church. A few months later, in 1836, she died after the birth of a son who had only lived for a few hours.

Kamehameha III died in 1854. The first constitution of 1840 had introduced universal male suffrage and this had been upheld in the second constitution of 1852. With the support of the growing American community, overtures were made to Washington and a treaty of annexation was pending shortly before the King's death. His successor, however, King Kamehameha IV, favoured a link with Britain, and American influence suffered a temporary setback. When he died in 1863 his brother King Kamehameha V attempted, in a third constitution (1864), to strengthen the power of the crown. A property qualification was introduced for voters which alienated the Hawaiian nobility.

During the reigns of the next two kings (Lunalilo, 1874-77, and Kalakaua, 1874-91) American influence grew steadily in trade, finance and politics. As a counter-balance, Kalakaua went back to universal suffrage and tried to set up a federation of Polynesian nations under Hawaiian hegemony. His efforts proved to be fruitless. And in 1897 he had to submit under duress to signing yet another constitution, the fourth, which restored the property qualification and in effect changed his status from that of an absolute to a constitutional monarch.

The heroine of *For Whom are the Stars?* is Queen Lili'uokalani, the last sovereign who succeeded in 1891 on the death of her brother and was deposed in 1893. After the death of Lili'uokalani, the daughter of American missionaries to Hawaii. She tends to get lost in a mass of detail through which the main outline of her story scarcely appears; yet like Marjorie Sinclair

she has been at great pains to documents it accurately and minutely. She unfolds a remarkable and little-known episode in the history of the islands.

The queen was strong-willed and determined to do justice to her people, who had suffered a continuous decline since the turn of the century. It must be understood that in the absence of mineral resources the wealth of Hawaii was in those days limited to the land, and it was from plantation agriculture that the revenue of the kingdom mainly derived. However, not only were the cane fields in the hands of a small class of white immigrants, but the discrimination of the Hawaiians to work for wages had already led to the introduction of Asian labour and Western writers on a considerable scale.

Thus it was on the planters, and especially on the small but influential American community led by the missionary families, that the queen's anger and political instinct were directed. Being mostly report and the queen was offered help in regaining her throne, subject to her willingness to give an amnesty to the authors of the coup. On this point she remained inflexible. For the queen, whose advisers seem to have been singularly untrustworthy, was apparently not disposed to listen either to the Americans or to her Hawaiian subjects.

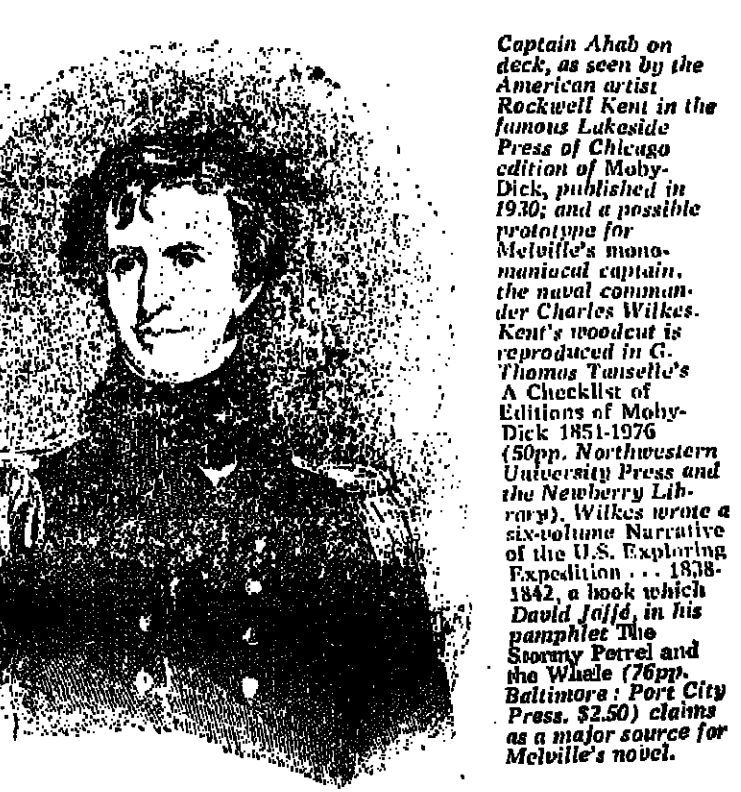
When shortly after her accession Lili'uokalani determined to abrogate the concessions extorted from her brother, proposed to introduce yet another constitution which would have restored the power of the monarchy and removed the property qualification. The cabinet, alarmed at the queen's determination, advised her to accept a new constitution, but she refused to do so. The queen's refusal to accept a new constitution, but she refused to do so.

By 1894 the royalists were restless, and the illicit importation of firearms got under way. It seemed clear that the republicanism in the United States would never permit Congress, favourable though it might be to the queen's cause, to restore the monarchy. Meanwhile the provisional government gave itself a new constitution and a new name, the Republic of Hawaii. One of the immediate consequences was that about a million acres of crown land held in trust for the people became government property and available for sale to all comers.

In January 1895 an ill-fated, badly-prepared and organized rising actually broke out. That it was doomed to fail was clear from the onset: many of the rebels were untrained and barefoot, and did not even have enough money to pay their train fare from town to town. The assembly point at Puuwaaweia, where the rebels had been provided; there was neither plan of campaign nor coordination. The leaders were incompetent and unreliable. The Republic of Hawaii on the other hand had good spies and much greater military resources. The veterans of the American Civil War.

After the inevitable collapse of the revolt, trials began. Six death sentences were passed but were soon commuted. The queen was also brought to trial and charged with misgovernment. The queen was sentenced to life imprisonment. However, her treatment was lenient. Within twenty months, pardon was granted. In any case had only mount prison arrest, was followed by liberty to move within Oahu, and after another ten months she was given leave to go to Washington, where she wrote her memoirs.

Two years later in 1898 President McKinley signed the resolution which annexed the islands to the United States, and in 1959 Lili'uokalani's kingdom became the fifth State of the Union. Today the State flag still incorporates a Union Jack. But alas, that is only a historical relic. The British consulate has now been closed. As for the Hawaiians, they are gone with the trade-wind.



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and the early phases of man's spread through the Americas. The second embraces the origins of the modern world, from 1500 to the present. The third, fourth, and succeeding chapters deal with ever-shorter periods as civilization burgeons in more and more corners of the globe. Each chapter has useful maps, charts, and parts of economic and technical progress, and many illustrations of artifacts and buildings, the latter as reconstructions. The first chapter covers the Southwest Asia, the Amazon Basin, Siberia, Central Asia and North Africa. The second, the Mediterranean, the Atlantic, the Indian Ocean, the Middle East, Europe and Mexico, although in large part this reflects the preoccupations of the author, it is interesting. In the whole the examples are well chosen, and the basic intention of the book is fascinating both in concept and execution.

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Anecdotal modes

By Roy Fuller

ROBERT GITTINGS:

Collected Poems.
177pp. Heinemann Educational.
£4.50.

F. T. PRINCE:

Afterword on Rupert Brooke
16pp. The Menard Press (23 Fitz-
warren Gardens, N.19). 65p.

Robert Gittings's book comes quite appropriately on the completion of his sixty-fifth year. He has been severe with his earlier work, of his five previous collections (the first two books, published in the 1930s, are not represented) only the last is printed in full; from the rest about half the poems are reprinted. There is a final section of twenty-two recent and uncollected poems. I liked this book. I must say one is encouraged when one finds the third line of the first poem describing moonlight on a house as "like a miller's sack." As a matter of fact there are no really quite so striking as this in the rest of the collection. Dr Gittings's poems impress as artistic wholes rather than by showiness of language and imagery. Some of the successes are the result of imaginative brainwork: there are no real examples of these in the excellent section of new poems—for instance, a neat poem about Dr Johnson's dread of disease and death. But a few of the best poems are more mysterious, often anecdotal like Graves and Norman Cameron but probably remembering them: examples are an earlier poem "Autumn" and a late poem "Villa in the South." It is very much to the poet's credit that he is always up to something—conveying information and experience in a variety of metres and stanzas. As at the start of "The Hill":

On the upland plateau,
Where foxes have been and the
rabbits have scuffled
And a single high-trailing deer
has slotted the snow,
The whiteness of the whiteness of the
seem one; a tree, by one bird
ruffled,
Is all that is moving there.

I don't think he ever wholly succeeds at his most ambitious. The sequence of poems about Keats, for instance, though containing some vivid and moving lines, is inclined to the pedestrian in its narrative and ratiocinatory passages. And in a sonnet sequence about a sojourner in America neither the complicated love relationship nor the background depicted convincingly comes to life. I am not sure that Dr Gittings is ever entirely at ease when he chooses the more complicated technical forms. "To meet next dawn the Atlantic might / Of a new day" (the opening of "four-day") the word "might" is unconvincing, seemingly forced by the rhyme, and odd instances of this kind, particularly in the sonnets, detract from other merits. Nevertheless, wherever the book is opened there will be found something to sharpen the eyes and understanding—and give pleasure.

I thought Dr Gittings's occasional use of syllabic metres extremely successful, setting him stimulating technical problems but without unduly restricting his choice of language. The new long poem (sonnet) 100 lines by F. T. Prince (whose birthday falls in September) is written entirely in the syllabic metre. It is a most successful development of the form. The last poem in the book is "The Testament of Beauty." The line

Who lies in danger of death and
comes to his bedside, dressed in
gold and beautiful,
And she asks him with a smile
"How do you like me?"
You have served me all your life.
My name is This-World.
Now I bring you your reward.

And she turns her back,
And he sees in the dark, fleckless,
a crawling with worms and bees
(as, and thinks like a dead dog,
"Alas, why did I ever serve you?"
the knight cries.

Something of the disciplined freedom and variety of the verse form is shown in the final poem, "The Testament of Beauty." The line

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Pierrot at the Abbey

By Martin Dodsworth

AUSTIN CLARKE:

The Third Kiss
37pp. Dublin: Dolmen Press. £7.50.

Austin Clarke's *Collected Plays* of 1963 do not seem to have contributed much to the revival of interest in his work which began with the publication of *Later Poems* two years previously. The publisher's description of them as "the most important post-Yeastian group of Irish verse dramas" was just, but so hedged round with qualifications as to be unhelpful. The very phrase suggests those inhibiting conditions under which Clarke laboured all his life, the shadow of Yeats falling darkly in whatever direction he struck out. The English reader casting a casual eye at a cold eye over the text and seeing the defiant Irishness of the subject-matter might well have asked himself whether the effort of penetrating an alien culture to comprehend the work of a minor verse-dramatist would be appropriately rewarded: and the question seems as real now as it must have fourteen years ago.

In fact, Clarke's plays exhibit a marked alertness to dramatic possibilities. In this play-within-the-play the

love affair is overshadowed by the girl's belief that she may have a religious vocation. In what may be the limits of that understanding, lovers take a country walk which culminates in the girl's stumbling over her spiritual adviser. He is doing penance for desires of the flesh by rolling naked in a bed of nettles. Even Clarke does not have the temerity to present this encounter on stage, though he relishes its grotesque force as the priest goes off in search of his nettle, his pauses, rummaging in his pockets: Dear me! Where did I put my gloves, my scarf?

I must protect face, hands, from bluster, scar.

No wonder that Pierrot and Pierrette, contemplating the place in which they are to perform, seem doubtful whether it is or is not satirical. At any rate, they want to use it for their own purposes: Pierrot is threatened by the presence of Harlequin in the wings ("Off stage, the human mind is a few circles, and Pierrot must somehow protect her from the consequences of her exit. Further, he wants to secure a kiss which the author of the play has not allowed for, and finally he wants the play to end happily—as it does for a confession the priest confesses to the girl (this is most dramatic) and as a consequence she abandons the idea of religious vocation and accepts her lover.

Tronny mounts upon irony in this brief play. Pierrot and Pierrette, types of the contented bourgeois lover, are given bodies only in plays for which the script is already written. The concept of the play is the Irish couple whose parts they play, conflict, but coincide. It is impossible to do more than hint at the richness of *The Third Kiss*. Like most of Clarke's work, it suffers from carelessness from extravagance from a willingness to make obscure what should be obvious. Yet the faults do not signify when weighed against the humane creativity of the whole.

Harlequin, in his last lines in the play, recalls that "Pierrot, the blackhead, stalked in that play last week by Alexander Blok," and so invites a comparison between his piece and one that ought to be in the modern repertoire. But it is not the modern repertoire that is at issue. It is the work of the Irish couple whose parts they play, conflict, but coincide. It is impossible to do more than hint at the richness of *The Third Kiss*. Like most of Clarke's work, it suffers from carelessness from extravagance from a willingness to make obscure what should be obvious. Yet the faults do not signify when weighed against the humane creativity of the whole.

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Territorial claims

By Alasdair Maclean

RUTH FAIRLIGHT:

Another Full Moon
44pp. Hutchinson. £1.95.

PATRICIA BURN and KEVIN CROSS:
Lark-Hall (Edinburgh)
New Poetry 2
204pp. Arts Council. £2.

Collected poems of poetry ought not, I suppose, to be differentiated one from another on grounds of the sex of their authors. Yet it does seem that contemporary women poets have tended to a territory where such basic as blood and birth, death and what comes after it, religion, loneliness and the anguish and impotence of being both liberal and female in a world growing more secular and masculine daily, are tackled as usually through going over. Men write these themes, too, of course, but less frequently and less thoroughly and with a greater fear—if they are British at least—of being thought pretentious or unmanly. Hence their source of

wry detachment, their indulgence in humour, their liking for satire and self-mockery. Women poets, on the other hand, tend to approach serious matters in a solemn fashion, hardly ever mucking themselves or their world. Indeed such is their commitment to their chosen subjects that other topics—careers, landscapes, animals, everyday life outside the home and husband—other than an unambiguously regarded love—scarcely get a look in.

It is a world of almost claustrophobic intensity, unfunny and unhappy. In sure hands it engenders a good deal of powerful poetry, though, with the range of themes often neutralized by monotony of tone and treatment, this can also be an oddly restricted poetry. Ruth Fairlight, whose hands grow steadily surer, exemplifies all these characteristics while retaining a generous measure of individuality.

Sometimes one wakes, leaving the night world behind. As usually as though it could be approached. At any time, as unconcerned as good—and pleasantly unusual—poems by Jenny Kiser, *Collected*. It needs to be said that it is not enough to make this anthology a bargain.

Coming up the beach, knees lifted high,
Clambering over invisible hurdles.
That is the beginning of a short poem called "Waking." I am not very happy about the use of the word "like" but this is otherwise a fine poem and one of a number of such in the collection. I could wish that Miss Fairlight raised her voice occasionally but in her own quiet way she is well worth reading.

New Poetry 2, in which I have to declare a small contributory interest, is the second of the Arts Council's annual anthologies. Like most of its kind it contains the ablest and the best, and the in-between, but the respective proportions of these seem to me to be reasonably in its favour. It is the bitness inevitable to a volume allowing a maximum of two poems per poet. It also covers a considerable amount of ground and introduces one to a number of potentially worthwhile newcomers. It is a little unfair to single out from so many, and I say that I need good—and pleasantly unusual—poems by Jenny Kiser, *Collected*. It needs to be said that it is not enough to make this anthology a bargain.

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New Poetry

Myths of the Gracchi

By E. Badian

KEITH RICHARDSON:

Daggers in the Forum
The revolutionary lives and the violent deaths of the Gracchi brothers
256pp. Cassell, £4.95.

"This book is about political revolution, and the men and women who made it happen, who built a great society (sic) and then fought to change it or to preserve it." As the first sentence arouses apprehension, the end peters out in facile "reluctance" ("today nobody can study this lamentable story without noticing the close parallels it presents to our own times"). The author's unimpeachable authority (the "unthinkable happened, and it can happen again"). Yet the reader of *Daggers in the Forum* ought not to be put off. In between, he will find a major historical crisis competently and clearly explained, told after recent specialist studies. Keith Richardson, a First in Greats, preserving a passionate interest in the Roman history he studied, has, after making a name for himself as a journalist, decided to do for a critical episode in the history of the Roman Republic what other specialists have done for the more popular fields of medicine and the sciences.

The task was not easy. It is perhaps more difficult to present ancient history to the non-specialist than it is to present (say) molecular biology. Owing to centuries of Roman tradition in our historical imagination, the concepts of ancient history are marked by familiar labels ("the government", "the people", "businessmen"), deceptive and unhelpful, yet unavoidable. In spite of occasional warnings, it is doubtful whether the reader will always be aware of the fact that the Senate (always was) that he must not think of the Senate in terms of the House of Commons, or of the people in terms of the majority of citizens. What Niebuhr called "confusion with the present" is the bane of the professional historian, no less than of the non-specialist, and a hankering after lessons for today is only too likely to encourage it.

Yet the journalist trying to transmit scholarship in readable and exciting form should be praised for the attempt as such, and for the considerable degree of success it has achieved, where scholarship has itself achieved to be at a loss. What is to be the basis of the interpretation and presentation of that remote, yet superficially familiar, society?

A formidable array of more or less obscure names provides the human background for the study of the Gracchi. Yet the environment in which these people lived—geography and economy, ideas and legends—is no less important to the historian than in other periods of a different social character. Few scholars have been able to maintain a balance. Concentration on the human background, the persons and their interrelations, can produce a fascinating human kaleidoscope (or, too often, an academic game played with names as counters) in a void. A different

Causes for celebration

H. W. FARKE:
Festivals of the Athenians
206pp. Thames and Hudson, £9.50.

Greek religion is most easily approached from its external manifestations. The *Aspects of Greek and Roman Life* series has already treated it in detail in the notable volume on burial customs by Kurtz and Boardman, and rightly now approaches it in life with this well-planned survey of Athenian festivals by a distinguished scholar whose contribution to the study of Greek oracles has been massive and important. Deubner's classic survey appeared in 1932 and is inevitably somewhat outdated. Its arrangement by gods, rather than by the calendar, always tended to separate the festivals rather sharply from the life of the Athenian citizen. H. W. Farke takes us through the

year, festival by festival, and does so much as can be done to distill the flavour which cult practice gave to Athenian life. He displays the wit to supersede Deubner completely, and in fact a stream of quotations and erudite comments, quite thickly bundled, which it would be inappropriate to document here, makes the book a most useful guide to modern knowledge for the professional scholar and the student of detail.

There is a more general interest in ancient religion and Athenian life should not be deterred. Professor Farke's grasp of essentials is firm. He has a plausible and unexaggerated estimate of the epigraphic content of the Mysteries, and does not go too far towards holding that most festivals were simply occasions for meat-eating. The illustrations are well chosen, but if Deubner could give us five pictures of the ladies who held their phrygian robes at the Hestia, we might in 1977 have had at least one.

D. M. Lewis

people, not to thwart them; though "the people", of course, meant the majority in the very unrepresentative voting assemblies. The tribunes had developed a delaying function, like that of the House of Lords, to ensure proper discussion and perhaps compromise. But where the people insisted, it could not properly be maintained.

This was the flexibility that had preserved the Roman constitution in the convention that made Octavian's action unforeseeable. His persistence in his veto, though legally correct, created an impasse that turned out to be inescapable. In the immediate situation, Tiberius had to respect by equally unpreceded action: the deposition of a tribune, which (especially in the light of his later actions in the execution of his plans) opened up a fairly real possibility of a quick descent into tyranny. In the long run, the consequences were more serious still. It is no wonder that the tribunate of Tiberius Gracchus has commonly been regarded as the beginning of the breakdown of the constitution. The action of Octavianus drained the lifeblood out of the Roman constitution.

One might suggest that it was only the combination of the process of estrangement between the governing class and the governed that we have noticed: the formal expression of a widespread sentiment. But it was none the less shocking for that, and none the less fatal. Besides, (although, of course, reason still frequently prevailed) compromise could at any moment be replaced, without warning, by confrontation. No one could predict whether on any given occasion the constitution would be capable of growth and adaptation, and the temptation to repeat Octavian's action, to accelerate the ossification of the constitution for the sake of immediate advantage, was overwhelming. The end could only be stagnation and violence.

Galus Gracchus is the more striking figure—more philosophical, more articulate—with an elaborate programme of all-embracing reform, to come with the old problems and some new ones consequent upon his brother's experience. On the whole, the outline is clear and the evidence is better. Whether he really wanted to throw "daggers into the forum" or whether he aimed at leading cannot easily be decided by reference to facts; though such as they are, they support the latter interpretation.

Not enough attention has been paid to the law (not stressed in the direct tradition) that exempted the Senate's allocation of provinces from the tribunician veto: there can be no question but that the author of that law meant the Senate to be in charge of administration and the tribunes (after the experience of M. Octavius) to be circumscribed by positive law where tradition might not suffice.

There has been no really outstanding scholarly treatment of Galus Gracchus and his Richardson, undoubtedly picking his way through modern discussion, is on the whole successful here. But there is no doubt that this book will help to show educated non-specialist readers why some of us still find the study of these remote events of absorbing interest—even if most of us would not share the author's belief that there are immediate practical lessons to be applied.

Yet tell it did, through the veto (unforeseen, the sources attest) of M. Octavius. Technically, Octavius was within his rights. A tribune was legally entitled to veto almost anything. But technical legality is irrelevant to the working of a constitution, especially an unwritten one. The use of a veto to prevent legislation wanted by the voters is (as we have seen) unknown up to this point—a significant down to romantic misunderstanding.

Numerous laws disliked by powerful men, even by the majority of the Senate (as we are told), had been allowed to pass without any serious opposition. It was a basic constitutional principle—recognized even by those who deplored it—that it was the tribune's duty to represent the

Windows to the body

By Ruth Padel

GUIDO MAJNO:
The Healing Hand
Man and Wound in the Ancient World
571pp. Harvard University Press, £13.75.

The art of medicine, says the doctor in Plato, celebrates the principles of love. Asclepius founded it by invoking in the body patterns of love and harmony. Equally, injury and violence shape human life, and so basic cultures, one of which is the remarkable contribution to the history of medicine *The Healing Hand*. Moved by transparent love for the body's healing mechanisms, by a gourmand's appetite for knowledge, by patience, and by generous admiration for anyone who has ever tried in any way to heal, this Californian doctor has spent ten years collecting material for a world history of medical care in antiquity. He has produced a real book, a luxury.

Dr Majno tackles problems of many kinds, linguistic, philosophical, papyrological and archaeological as well as medical, and shows very clearly where the real problem of medical history stands: who is going to practise it? A qualified doctor, obviously; to correct, as Dr Majno does, the manifold naiveties and misapprehensions of scholars on scientific detail. But historical qualifications are equally necessary. Medical history is military history; social history, the history of ideas; patterns of theory and treatment interact with the other institutions of a culture: culinary, cosmetic, and even as well as social and intellectual.

All these require a particular kind of methodology which takes time to learn, time which the physician spends learning the methods of his own art. Dr Majno shows us in the best possible way how impossible it is for one man,

even one as energetic, imaginative and inspired as he is, in satisfying the demands of both. He has a doctor's feel for evidence. He knows what it is like to examine a patient, to diagnose, soothe and cure, and he recognizes what are regarded in sources which are opaque to the scholar. He resists ancient dressings and drugs, evaluates recorded treatments, explores conceptual implications behind treatment and theory.

But it is a thousand pities that he did not turn to those who could have suggested a consistent methodology to him, and shown him how to keep his head examining different societies from the yardstick of his own; to historians, sociologists and anthropologists. For he studies six basic cultures, one of which is the remarkable contribution to the history of medicine *The Healing Hand*. Moved by transparent love for the body's healing mechanisms, by a gourmand's appetite for knowledge, by patience, and by generous admiration for anyone who has ever tried in any way to heal, this Californian doctor has spent ten years collecting material for a world history of medical care in antiquity. He has produced a real book, a luxury.

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natural tendency to concentrate on medical ideas by noting and making vivid the conditions and technicalities of treatment. It is a pity that he should omit Alcmeon of Croton, who discovered nerves running from the senses to the brain long before Galen; and also the Hippocratic oath, despite controversy over its date, for this contains the paradoxical promise to refrain from the knife, diet and drugs are all very well, but what a knife the doctor can really "modify nature". Use of the knife is a social and legal boundary in different cultures, and, despite the oath, the Hippocratic doctor used it with keen familiarity. Dr Majno overemphasizes the split between religious and technical medical ideas in ancient Greece, ignoring such important recent work in this area as that of Giulia Lavinia and Lata Entralgo. Such a general bias against the priestly element in medicine, against the magical, psychological, spiritual and mystery element in physical healing. He ignores any serious form of faith-healing or laying-on of hands; which is surprising given his title. He gestures towards it occasionally and ambiguously, being too good a doctor completely to ignore it, but too serious a scientist to explore it.

Inflammation, Dr Majno's own subject, stimulates him to make other valuable linguistic observations on Egyptian, Sumerian and Greek terminology; but he does not compare these systematically. Such images, from which doctors construct their medical language—the battle imagery which characterizes their relation to infection, the imagery of fire which they use naturally of disease—have their own relation to units of belief which reappear in many medical traditions: the mark of evil, the attack on the weapon which made the wound can cure it (and other manifestations of homeopathy), that efficient cures are painful, that a diseased body must be drained (of energy or blood). He ignores also the relation of religious ritual to each culture to the gestures of healing; missing, in his bias against

the spiritual, the particular collision of religious belief, medical imagery, and theory-patterns unique to each culture.

But one function of a really useful and stimulating book is to satisfy its readers. Dr Majno is sensitive to the doctor's role in each society, seeing the doctor as carrier of disease, requirer of soldiers, priest, barber, student of nature. The doctor is sometimes a common denominator between different social elements. In some cultures doctors are graded according to social class or religious motivation; in others, according to a degree or area of medical knowledge. Dr Majno is aware also of different cultural attitudes to the basic ingredients of the doctor's art: to pain, blood, pus and other body materials. He is particularly subtle on Egyptian attitudes to excrement. One learns from him about Sumerian bee-making, the comparative antibacterial properties of Cilantro and Bordeaux, Roman operations for cataract, mouthwashes in ancient Athens, the biochemical structure of the frankincense leaf. Scholars of Antiquity will find a significant new angle on their world; physicians will be surprised, informed, amused, and often humbled.

Dr Majno stimulates his reader to consider the paradoxes in the doctor's role, paradoxes more apparent in our traditions, perhaps, than in his own. The wound is the medium of the doctor's art, but its pain belongs to the patient. He learns how to heal a particular body only by investigating and destroying others. He is motivated by a wish to stop suffering, but in doing so he has to increase it. Dr Majno's great contribution is to make us share his own insight and sympathy with ancient doctors and their patients; and to illuminate by his imagination and expertise new ways of seeing physical trauma. Wounds are a window to the body, an invasion, a mark of evil, an attack on tissue, and a most ancient method of communication. As he remarks, they shape human life, body and mind. But he points out also, with that detached love of his own profession, which is one of the endearing features of his work, that a doctor flatters himself immensely by saying so.

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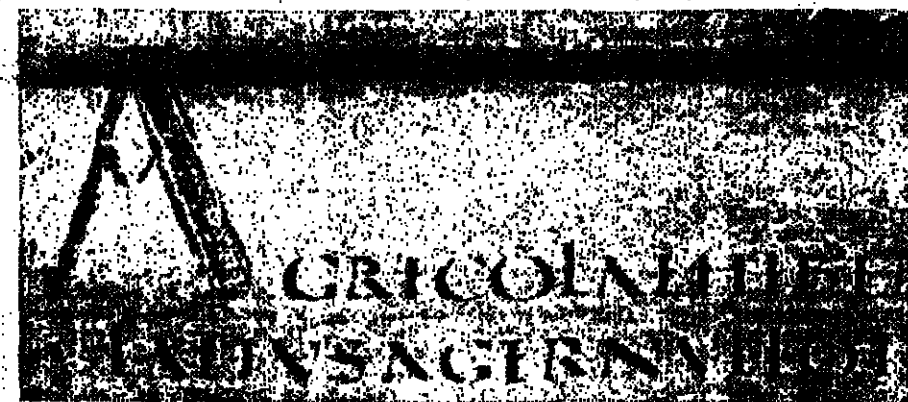
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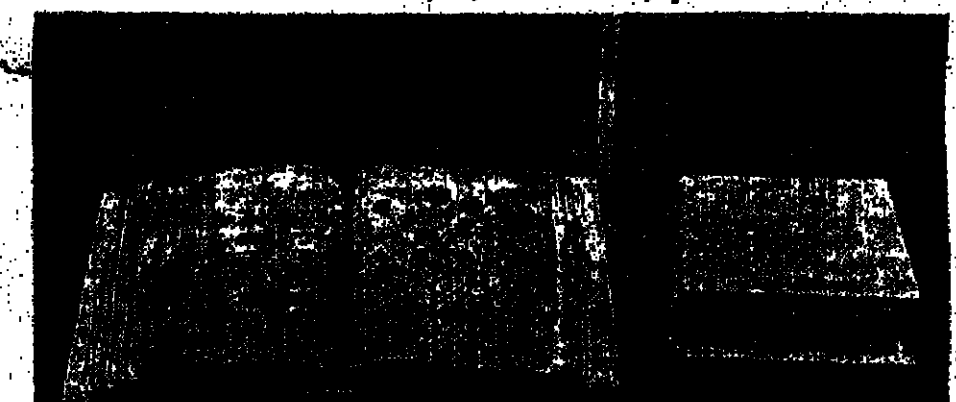
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